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"HER SISTER"

1909

AUTHOR

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72 PGS

✓ HER SISTER. ✓

An American Drama

✓ In Three Acts

By

Mrs Ivar Levinsohn. ✓

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**Characters:**

**Cora.**

**Julia.**

**Martin.**

**Mr Gorham.**

**Alec.**

**Fred.**

**Baby Caroline.**

Act I.

Scene: Kitchen in a Middle Class flat in Manhattan. It contains a gas range, tubs, ice-chest and a dish closet with glass doors. The door to the "dumny" is next to the ice-chest. A coffee-grinder is nailed on the wall near door leading to the dining room. Two barrels are in the room, also a couple of boxes. Things are pretty much in disorder, showing plainly the family is packing up to move.

As curtain rises Martin Neil, a boarder in the Gorham family, is seen standing on a chair-ladder passing down crockery from the closet to Cora Gorham.

Martin

It's hotter up here than I hope to find it after I ~~am~~ am dead.

Cora

as she takes some plates from him and places them on the tubs: laughing, Oh, but you must'nt die before we have moved.

Martin

looks down at her quizzically, Oh, may I die after you have moved, Miss Cora?

Cora

Martin, you know I am only joking.

Martin

Of course I know you are joking, but I would really like to find you in serious mood for about ten minutes.

Cora

What's the use of being serious, when one can get along just as well without. Pass me that soup-tureen, will you please?

Martin

turns to closet and looks up, What's that?

Cora

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Cora

That large dish with the cover on.

Martin

looks again, Oh, you mean that thing with the handles on?

Cora

Yes, that's it.

<sup>H</sup> He takes the dish from closet and is about to hand it to Cora when he makes a mis-step and staggers as if about to fall. Cora, frightened, grasps his leg and helps steady him.

Cora

gasps, You almost took my breath away. I thought you were going to break my soup-tureen.

Martin

a disappointed look on his face, You thought I was going to break your soup-tureen? Well, what about my neck? That wouldn't count, I suppose.

Cora

as she takes tureen from him, You know I wouldn't want you to break your neck, Martin is all smiles. while you were doing something for me. His smile vanishes quickly, and in its place comes a look of keen disappointment.

Martin

You're so kind to me, Miss Cora, I scarcely know how to thank you.

Cora

mischievously, Now, won't you be kind enough and finish the job; remember, you volunteered readily and I accepted. You can't go back on your word, you must finish it. She laughs.

Martin

Ort—

Cora

Or no hot muffins for a whole week.

Martin

Well, I guess I have to hustle. Hot muffins and I ,hm, we are on good terms alright; too good to part for a whole week. He turns to close, takes a handfull of dishes and hands them to Cora. Here, catch them quick.

Cora

startled, Do'nt throw them.

Martin

Well, then, here, take them and hurry back. I'm going to do this job in a rush. She takes plates and places them on the table. Do you want everything out of this closet?

Cora

Of course I do, You do'nt think I am going to leave my dishes for the next tenant, do you?

Martin

as he hands her some cups, Well, I just thought it would save time and trouble of packing. The clock strikes two.

Cora

startled, Great Scott, it's two o'clock. Father will be home in fifteen minutes, and I have'nt got a thing in the house for his lunch. Martin has a hand full of dishes, but she does'nt even look at him. I'll run and call Fred. She runs into other room. Martin is left standing with plates in hand. He is in a predicament as he can't come down with all the dishes in his hand. He stands there meditating in an amusing way.

Cora

is heard calling, Fred, Fred, come up here; I want to send you to the store. No? Now you come right up, or father will have no lunch. You can hear her closing the window.

Martin

I wonder if she'll come right in? Is she do'nt——

Enter Cora. She looks at him standing there on the ladder with dishes in hand, helpless. She laughs heartily.

Martin

sarcastically, Ha-ha, Ha-ha, the laugh's all on me, is'n it?

Cora

Of course it is. Why didn't you put the dishes back in the closet till I got back?

Martin

an amused look of surprise on his face, I never thought of that.

Cora

Judging from your attitude when I came in I am sure you did'nt. Now

hand them to me and come down, please, while I get father's  
~~best~~  
lunch ready.

He comes down. Cora places plates on tubs. Bell rings. Cora presses the button.

Cora

I hope it is Freddie.

Martin

And if it is Fred it is'nt likely he'll go an errand for you in a hurry.

Cora

Oh, yes, he will. You know I kept him home from school this afternoon to help me, and he promised he would.

Martin

Yes: but school-hours are almost over now. He knows you can't send him to school today any more.

Door opens with a bang. Enter Fred, a sort of a Peck's Bad Boy.

Fred

Now what do yer want again. Why could'nt you tell me what yer wanted through the winder, so I do'nt have ter run dem stairs all der time.

Cora

You do'nt want all the people in the neighborhood to know our business, do you?

Fred

They do'nt care, and I do'nt care neither; only you're so blamed stuck up.

Cora

Now Freddie, please do'nt waste any more time. Father we'nt have any lunch if you do'nt ~~hurry~~ hurry.

Fred

Do'nt you worry about father not getting any lunch; he ain't no fool. Give us your money and tell us what you want.  
Cora goes to corner of room, takes purse from her stocking and hands Fred a coin.

Cora

Go to the delicatessen store and get a pound of sausages, a rye bread and two dill pickels.

Fred

as he opens door, I'll make that three dill pickels, one for me.  
He runs out.

Cora

calls after him, Ask the delicatessen man to send me some boxes  
She places plate, knife fork and glass on that part of the table she had cleared off. I do wish we were moved and settled.

Martin

Yes, and I hope after we are moved and settled we'll be allowed to stay. That brother of yours has succeeded in getting you dispossessed the second time, and I'm afraid you'll get your walking papers the

closet, I think there is something on top of that closet. I'll get up and look to make sure. He climbs ladder, looks and sees a cat-o-nine-tail; holds it up.

Cora

laughs, Fred must have thrown that up there so father would'nt find it.

Martin throws it down. Cora picks it up and puts in drawer in closet

Martin

looks again in closet, Here's something else. He pulls out a doll with one leg and one arm. Cora looks at it; she does not smile, but drops her eyes avoiding his gaze.

Martin

Is this the remnant of one of your children?

Cora

whispers, Yes; throw it down to me. aside, She used to love that doll very much.

Martin

looks at the doll, Well, I do'nt think you were a great judge of beauty. He throws it down.

Cora

picks it up, looks at it, sighing, If this doll could speak she would tell you of all the happy days we spent together.

Bell rings; Cora presses button.

Martin

There's nothing more up here.

Cora

I hope it's Fred. Father will be here in a few minutes. I hate to let him wait.

Martin

If it is Fred he lost the money, for it ai'nt much like him to get back so soon.

A knock is heard at the door. Cora opens door. Enter Janitor,

Janitor

Good afternoon, Miss Gorham. I'm going to ask a favor yust dis once time, und dat's der letzt favor off to-day. De landlord hewas promise me if I let das flat to-day he give me sure a dollar too much mit mine vages. You know, mine angel, it ai'nt was my business vat you must move put. I'm a poor woman; please help so I get dat dollar, yes?

Martin is trying hard not to laugh.

Cora

Well, what do you want me to do; how can I help you?

Janitor

Yust let dis lady look in das flat, vill you?

Cora

Bring the lady in, but please do it quickly, for I am very busy.

Janitor

as she opens door, ~~xxxxxxxxxx~~ Sure you are busy; mofing ai'nt no fun. She shrieks down the hall at the top of her voice, Soffie Soffie, tell de lady to come op quick.

Martin

I'll finish packing in the parlor until your father is through with his lunch, then we can work together again.

Cora

I am sure I do'nt know how we would ever get packed without you

Martin

Say no more about it, Miss Cora, for it is a pleasure to me to be able to help you. He goes to door. Do'nt let any more flat hunters in; it takes up too much of your time. He goes in. //



Enter Janitor with lady, sort of old maid type.

Janitor

I hope you vill much like das flat, because you have no childrens; den you do'nt have soon to move.

Lady

in snappy manner, I am an unmarried lady.

Janitor

Ash, I am so glad; but it's no funny business to live mit yourself alone.

Lady

I am not alone. I have two older sisters; we live together very happily.

Janitor

How nice. Vell, now dis is der kitchen.

Lady

putting on her glasses, The kitchen is rather small; and that dish closet, ry, how tiny.

Janitor

Vell, you got lots of room for a china closet in der dining room.

Lady

That gas range is dreadfully worn.

Janitor

Vell, you kin paint it.

Lady

Those wash-tubs are in a horrid place; they would look much nicer over there. She points to opposite side of room.

Janitor

If I could lift 'em I'd put them over dere, yust to please you. Bell rings; Cora presses button.

Lady

I will look at the other room if you do'nt mind.

Cora opens door to dining-room.

Janitor

You could nefer see such loffly rooms vot dese are. Lady follws her in.

Cora opens the door. Enter Fred.

Fred

throws things down on the table, Gee, but that delicatessen feller is doin' de business. There was five ahead of me. Say, sis, kin I have one of dem sausages?

Cora

You had your lunch, Freddie, besides, those sausages must be cooked.

Fred

looks alarmed, Cooked? Why, I just ate one of dem; I thought it tasted kind o' funny.

Cora

Freddie, you prokised not to lie or steal.

Fred

I didn't lie; I told you, didn't I?

Janitor

is heard, Vell, I'm sorry you don't like das flat, but I tink das flat was glad.

They enter kitchen. Freddie looks at the old maid, as if she had just arrived for his amusement.

Fred

points at her, laughing loudly, Holy Gee, where did it come from? Cora grabs him by the ear and pulls him into the other room.

Lady

indignant, What an awful naughty boy.

Cora

turns to lady, I'm sorry; indeed, I am very sorry.

Lady

That boy needs the Cab-O-Nine-Tail. She goes to door. I thank you for your trouble, Good day, Miss.

Cora

Good day.

Janitor

I was yust glad Freddie done it. De dam old maid don' know vat she wants. She goes to door, If you want sometings, Miss Cora, yust tell me, und I vill commodate you mit pleasures. She leaves.

Cora lights gas stove, fills pot with water and puts it on stove. She places bread and pickles on table, takes bottle of beer from ice-chest and puts it on table.

Key is heard in the door. Enter Mr Gorham, a letter-carrier, in his uniform. He removes cap and coat.

Cora

You're a little late, aren't you, father?

Mr G

Yes. I met Will Higgins at the corner and we talked for a while.

Cora

smiling, Well, I'm not sorry for I am a little late. She drops sausages in pot.

Mr G

goes over to her, You're working so hard. my girl, and I can't take a day off to help you. Two carriers are sick now.

Cora

I'm not working so very hard; Martin is such a help.

Mr G

washing his hands, We are very lucky to get a fellow like Martin to board with us, and I'm pretty sure there's a reason. He smiles.

Cora

cutting the bread, Yes, Martin is a fine fellow. I do'nt know

whether I love him; besides, he has'nt asked me.

Mr G

seating himself at the table, He'll ask allright. I can see that by the way he sometimes puts on his necktie.

Cora laughs, takes sausages from pot, puts them on small tray and places same on table.

Mr G

Dogs, hey? Well, they are nice for a change. Got any mustard?

Cora

I wonder if Martin packed it away. Oh, no, here it is. She takes it from tubs and puts it on the table.

Mr G

begins his lunch, Do you ~~xxx~~ know, girlie, I really enjoy this lunch.

Cora

as she finds something to pack in barrel, I'm glad you do. A noise is heard in the other room. Cora runs to the door and opens it. Whatever under the sun are you doing? Come out here at once. Freddie comes out on a pair of roller skates.

Mr G

Were you rolling on your skates in the room?

Fred

I only tried me new wheels.

Mr G

Take those skates off and come here to me.

Fred

Gee, a feller can't do nothin' around here without there's a fuss.

Cora

whispers to him, De'nt be impudent or you'll get whipped. Fred takes off skates and comes nearer to Nather.

GORA

Suppose you finish your lunch before you talk to Freddie, father

Mr G

n I prefer getting ~~staring~~ through with him first. He turns to Fred, I need not tell you we're compelled to move because you're a nuisance to everyone around you. Now this sort of business must stop, you must learn to behave or I shall put you away until your twenty-one years of age; you're no longer a baby, your poor sister has enough work and worry without you making her thoroughly unhappy. Now, I want you to promise me you will try and be <sup>a</sup> better boy. Freddie stands looking downward, says, " I don't mean to make sister unhappy."

Mr G

You don't, then you must think packing and moving is lots of fun.

Fred

I don't mean to be bad. I'm going to try to be good, sis won't have to move on my account any more. Fred goes over to Gora, puts his arm around her waist, Gora kisses him says, " you may go down the street now. Fred makes a dive to the door. but mind don't go away from the door, I may need you.

Fred

Just you call me sis when you want me I'll come in a giftee. He runs out.

Gora

You see father, he's not a real bad boy, he's only mischievous, he will outgrow that.

Mr G

I hope so, but you know your sister didn't outgrow her vanity. She was vain and forward from childhood.

Gora

Cora

Now Father, eat your lunch don't speak of that now.

Mr G

Yes, I guess I will eat. I haven't got much time to spare now. He begins to eat Cora is again busy.

Mr G

Why Cora, I 'most forgot about Caroline. Where is she?

Cora

I sent her to cousin Bessie to keep her out of mischief.

Mr G

She'll be alright with Bessie, I guess.

Cora

Why ofcourse she will; Bessie just loves baby Caroline.

Enter Martin. Mr. Gorham looks up.

Mr G

Ain't you at business this afternoon? You sais you could only stay at home in the morning.

Martin

I did say that, but I'm kind of lavy to go back this afternoon.

Cora

But he ain't lavy around here.

Mr G

AS he leaves table, That's luck for us. Martin, I don't know how we'll ever repay you.

Martin

We only work for pay in our places of business.

Mr G

As he rises, kisses Cora, takes hat and goes to door. I'll help you a lot when I get home, don't try to do too much. He puts one arm in coat sleeve as he leaves the room.

Cora cleans table, and tells Martin he may unscrew the coffee-



grinder from the wall. She takes plates from table to sink, opens faucet.

Cora

Not a bit of hot water but the sign outside reads, "Five rooms and bath, steam-heated and hot water supply", ~~Man~~

Martin

As he unscrews the coffee-grinder, that's alright. We get steam when the Water kettle boils, and ofcourse the water is hot when it gives off steam.

Cora

I guess you're very near right. I think we'll have some of that steam and hot water in a minute. She lights gas-stove and puts on kettle of water. Bell rings. Cora presses button, then looks at Martin. I say Martin, we'll need some coffee for breakfast in the morning. Have you got that all unscrewed?

Martin

Not quite. If you'll just hold it on this side I'll manage to grind some for you. Cora holds grinder, Martin begins to grind.

Fred

Open the door Cora, Cora lets go coffee drops all over the floor.

Cora

Fred will cause mischief even when he doesn't mean to. She opens the door, Fred enters.

Fred

Say sis, there's a man down stairs wants to know if he kin see the flat.

Martin

Now please don't have any more house-hunters to-day.

Fred

To Martin. I wish you'd please butt out. This feller give me a dime to find out. He goes over to Cora pleadingly. Now please sis

let him come up. He won't bother you. I hate to tell him no even if he didn't give me the dime.

Cora

Now Fred, I'm going to put you to the test. If you give back the dime you may tell him to come up. Fred shuffles his feet as if he wasn't pleased with the bargain.

Cora

Remember, you promised to be a good boy.

Fred

Alright, I'll give it back. He goes to door. Cora eyes are bright with pride. But maybe he won't take the dime. He opens door and runs down.

Cora

I think there is the makings of a good man in him after all.

Martin

What about this coffee?

Cora

Oh! never mind. We'll drink tea to-morrow morning. You don't mind do you?

Martin

No I don't mind. He begins on last screw of ~~mk~~ grinder just as Fred comes in with young man. The man is about thirty years of age, refined and well attired.

Fred

Here sis, show the gentleman the rooms. will you?

Alex

I'm sorry to trouble you.

Cora

It's no trouble to me sir, You may look at the place, that is, if you can stand the appearance of it as it is now.

Alex

We can't expect to see things in their places during moving day.

Cora

smiling, I'm glad you know that some men don't. This is the kitchen the other rooms Fred will show you.

Alex

As he looks around. Well I suppose the kitchen is alright.

Fred

Come right this way and I'll show you the other rooms. Mr. Underwood crosses the room and steps on coffeebeans.

Martin

As he looks at him and smiles. The coffee-beans are moving too. they both laugh. Mr Underwood and Fred go into the other room. Cora quickly takes dust pan and brush and clears away coffee from floor.

Martin

I wonder why a man like him looks at a twenty-five dollar flat?

Cora

Perhaps it's not for him. Door opens. enter Fred and Mr Underwood

Alex

To Cora, Miss-er--

Cora

Miss Gorham.

Mr U

Thank you Miss Gorham will you allow your brother to call the lady that is waiting at the door?

Cora

Certainly.

Fred

As he nears the door. Shall I tell her to come up?

Mr U

Yes, please tell ~~her~~ her I think she'll like the flat. Fred leaves.

Martin

Plathunting is almost as bad as moving, is'n it?

Mr U

watching Cora packing crockery into barrel, Yes, I suppose it is; but I see Mrs Gorham is quite a help to her husband.

Cora

looks up quickly and smiles, I am not Mrs Gorham; Mrs Gorham is dead, I am her eldest daughter.

Mr U

I beg your pardon. I thought—

Cora

I understand. Wo'nt you sit down?

Door opens. Enter Freddie with lady. Cora is bending to push back a soap box from the chair she places for Mr U.

The lady looks around and walks towards Cora. Cora looks up. A strange look of surprise crosses her face. She rises slowly, then stands looking in wild surprise at the lady. Their eyes meet. They both stand as if rooted to the spot.

Mr U

breaks the silence, I think you will like the flat, Julia.

At the mention of the name Julia, Cora's face is one of wild joy. She staggers and grasps the chair for support. The men notice this

Martin

comes forward, Anything wrong, Miss Cora?

Cora

scarsely able to speak with joy and surprise, No, Martin, no; please—please leave the room and take Fred with you.

Martin

Come, Fred, we'll take down the pictures.

Martin looks at Cora, suspecting there is something wrong. He leaves the room with Fred.

Julia

turns to Mr U., Alex, will you please leave us alone for a few moments?

Mr U

Certainly. I will wait for you in the restaurant. You needn't hurry. He goes to the door, turns and looks at Cora, Good day, Miss Corham.

Cora

Good day, sir. He leaves.

Cora

cries, soon as door is closed, Julia, Julia, aren't you glad to see your sister?

Julia

Well, I am, if you are.

Cora

throws her arms around Julia's neck, Oh, Julia, you don't know what it costed me to refrain from doing this before; but I was afraid you didn't want him to know. How lovely you look, how stout you have grown. Turn around, let me look at you. Tell me, dear, tell me all about yourself. Were you happy all these years? Were'n't you homesick at all? She is beside herself with joy.

Julia

It wouldn't do me much good to be homesick, would it?

Cora

Ah, you didn't try, dear; you didn't try. If you did you would have found out there were open arms ready to receive you.

Julia

Then why were they so against my going on the stage?

Cora

Because you are pretty, and you are vain. Because you are easily

led, and our dear parents thought it was'nt safe. But when you left us without a word their hearts were broken. They longed for their child's return; but you did'nt come till now, and now—her eyes are glowing with joy—you came by chance. It was the hand of God, was'nt it, dear?

Julia

Perhaps it was. Say, you have'nt told me how my blond hair becomes me.

Cora

I think you looked much prettier when your hair was brown.

Julia

That shows you are a poor judge of style.

Cora

Well, we wo'nt talk about that now. Tell me, what's his name, I mean his first name?

Julia

Is'nt he a fine fellow? That's the kind of taste I have. Even his name is a fine one; Underwood, Alex Underwood.

Cora

repeats, Alex Underwood. How lovely. Then you are Mrs Alex Underwood.

Julia stands fumbling at chair; she does'nt look up.

Cora

watching her closely, You do'nt seem very glad at the mention of that name. Do'nt you love him?

Julia

I love the ground he stands on.

Cora

But I do'nt understand.

Julia

Well, she hesitates, I—I may as well tell you the truth; I am



not Mrs Underwood.

Cora

in shocked surprise, Not Mrs Underwood. She repeats. Not Mrs Underwood? Why, you were going to rent this flat with him. Julia does not answer.

Cora

a look of horror in her eyes, Oh, Julia, for God's sake do'nt let me think—. Oh, what am I talking about? I am full of evil conscience. I always did jump at conclusions before it was necessary. She looks steadily at Julia, who avoids her gaze. Well, why do'nt you say something, why do'nt you?

Julia

meets her gaze slowly, Well, I may as well tell it now as later. Mr Underwood fitted up an appartment for me.

Cora

draws a deep breath, Then you are his—, oh, no, no, I can't, I wo'nt say the word. It's too awful, she sobs, it's too awful.

Julia

I told you the truth. I suppose you have no further use for me, so I'll be going. She goes to the door.

Cora

runs after her, No, no, Julia, you are home now. I promised to keep you home if I ever found you, and I'm going to do it.

Julia

Who did you promise?

Cora

Our mother.

Julia

Did'nt she tell me she never wanted to see my face again if I went on the stage?

Cora

Cora

She kept her word; she can never see your face again.

Julia looks up quickly in alarm. Cora sobs. Julia goes over to her

Julia

whispers, Is our mother dead?

Cora

Yes.

Julia sinks into chair weeping.

Cora

stands over her, Our dear mother died with your picture in her hand, with your name on her lips. "Bring her home" were the last words she said to me. They both weep. Julia, you are home; no matter what you have done, we'll bury the past, we'll begin all over again.

Julia

lifts up her head, But that's impossible; I can't, I won't live without him.

Cora

surprised, Can't live without him? Why, I thought you'd be glad to come back.

Julia

If you were in Paradise, would you leave it? Well, life with him is Paradise to me. I love him.

Cora

Then you will not grant your mother's last wish?

Julia

I'd do anything else she asked of me; but I ain't going to give him up my life, just because she asked me to. She was happy with the man she loved.

Cora

But she was married to the man she loved.

Julia

Well, it ai'nt my fault that I ai'nt.

Cora

And you are willing to live with a man who refuses to marry you?

Julia

He is kinder to me than most husbands are to their wives.

Cora

That is'nt true. If he were kind and considerate he would marry you, but he's not. You are simply a pretty doll in his hands. You are a plaything he will tire of. Some day he will drop you as a child drops her china doll; but the doll only breaks her lifeless head, you will break your heart. Can't you see, dear, you're wrong, you're wrong.

Julia

It is better to live a little while than not to live at all. And now let's finish the argument. I can see we will never agree on this subject, so I'll say good-bye. She goes to the door.

Cora

runs after her and catches her by the arm,, Wait a moment, wait, I—I—want to say something; just give me a moment's chance to think. She laughs hysterically, I forgot what I was going to say.

Really, she laughs again, it is no lie. Let me see. Oh, yes, do'nt you, do'nt you want to see baby Caroline? She's a big girl now; she goes to Kinder Garten.

Julia

surprised, Goes to Kinder Garten? Why, she could scarcely walk when I left. Is she pretty?

Cora

Pretty? You ought to see her. She's like one of those little fig-

Julia

I'd love to see her.

Cora

You can see her. I'll send Freddie after her.

Julia

Is Fred a big boy?

Cora

Indeed he is; why, you saw him. He brought you up to the flat.

Julia

Was that Freddie?

Cora

Yes.

Julia

My, but he has grown. I didn't know him.

Cora

I'll call him. She goes to door and calls: Freddie. Fred comes in. She takes him in her arms. Freddie, do you remember sister Julia?

Fred

Yes, I do; she looks a lot like this lady, only she wasn't so stout and didn't have such gold hair.

Julia

I am Julia, Freddie, even if my hair is gold now.

Fred

to Cora, Is she Julia?

Cora

Yes, dear, she is Julia.

Fred runs over into Julia's arms. He looks at her and kisses her affectionally.

Fred

Why did you go away, Julia? Mother cried so much after you left.

Julia bits her lips.

Cora

Run down to cousin Bess, Freddie, and bring baby home.

Julia

Yes, Fred, do bring her. I want to see the kid.

Fred

Runs to the door, I'll be back in a giffee. He leaves.

Cora is so happy, she scarcely knows what to do or say.

Cora

Sit down, Julia; I suppose you are tired. I should like to make you a cup of coffee, but the grinder is already packed up, and I know you do'nt drink tea.

Enter Martin.

Martin

Do you know what I did with the screw driver, Miss Cora?

Cora

Why, yes, there it is on the ice-chest.

Martin goes over to take the screw driver. Cora is a in a quandry then plucks up courage.

Cora

Martin, this is my sister.

Martin looks surprised.

Cora

at a loss for words, Yes, er--yes, I know you are surorised; we never told you about her. You see she was so far away, so far—  
Where was it, Julia?

Julia

Oh, a few hundred miles.

Cora

Yes, It was very far,

She is so perplexed.

Martin

Martin

noticing the state she is in comes to her rescue, I am glad to meet your sister. He holds out his hand to her, They shake hands.

Julia

I see you are a busy man.

Martin

Yes, moving is'nt all paly.

Cora

I should say not.

Martin

You'll excuse me for a few moments, wo'nt you. I've got the looking glass half down; the other half will fall down if I do'nt hurry. He runs in.

Julia

He looks like a fine fellow. When does it come off?

Cora

I do'nt know; he has'nt asked me yet.

Julia

He will. I'll bet my bull-dog, he will.

Bell rings. Cora presses button.

Cora

That's the children. You'll be so surprised when you see the baby. She opens door and calls: Is that you, darling?

Baby

is heard, I'm coming, sister.

Cora

calls, Help her, Freddie; you know it's hard for her to climb the stairs. That's the girl. Come along.

A few seconds elapse. Fred comes in with baby Caroline, a child, five years old.



Cora

takes her by the hand, with great pride, What do you think of her Julia?

Julia

enraptured, How lovely she has grown. We'nt you kiss me, dear?

Baby

Sister says, I must'nt kiss everybody.

Julia

But I ai'nt everybody; I'm only one.

Cora

You may kiss her all you like.

The child looks at Julia, then runs over to her. Julia takes her in her arms and kisses her affectionately.

Cora

Baby, do you love sister Cora very much?

Baby

Course I do.

Cora

Would you like another sister to play with and to buy you toys and candy?

Baby

Oh, that would be nice.

Julia

Will you let me be your sister too?

Baby

Yes, but sister Cora is first.

Julia

Of course she is, and I'll be second, we'nt I?

Baby

Yes, if you'll give me a nickel for ice cream soda.

Julia

Of course I will. She opens her purse. hands baby a nickel and

gives Fred a dime.

Baby

Now I must go and get my soda. Will you 'scuse me if I go?

Julia

Of course I will. Fred takes baby's hand and goes to door.

Cora

Be careful crossing the tracks, Fred.

Fred

I'll watch her allright. They leave, as baby throws them a kiss.

Cora

What do you think of her.

Julia

She is a perfect darling. How lively she must make things here.

Cora

Well, I should say so. The house would be very lonesome without her. Come, dear. take off your hat.

Julia

wakes up, Take off my hat? She begins to think, Gee, I almost forgot he is waiting at the restaurant. I must be off now. Tell the kids I'll drop in to see them again. Oh, by the way, give me your new address. I must know where to find you.

Cora

shakes her sadly, You can't have the new address. You can't call while—while you are his—.Oh, Julia, that word, it chokes me.

Julia

Very well, then; if you do'nt want me I suppose I'll have to get on the same as I did for four years. She puts her hand on knob of door. Good-bye, sis.

Cora

throws her arms around her and wails, No, no, you sha'nt go; at least, not yet. She locks the door with one hand unnoticed by

will see you as you should be, who knows, Julia, he may marry you.  
Julia seems to be thinking.

Joyfully, Why, dear, you have more hope to keep him by staying  
here than you have by going with him.

Julia

Will father consent to his coming here?

Cora

Leave that to me. Father will consent allright, and we'll play a  
game worth playing. The man must care for you or he would not be  
so considerate. The only drawback is respectability. Well, he'll  
find you can be respectable after all! Now, come, dear, take off  
your hat. She goes over to her. Oh, where are those hatpins. I  
have one. Here is the other. She removes the hat. There, you look  
more like yourself now.

Julia

Suppose I go around to the restaurant and tell him?

Cora

I'll send Fred.

Julia

That would look cowardly. You need'nt be afraid; I'll come allright  
You know I did wrangs, but I always owned up to the truth. I would  
not be afraid to tell you if I intended to stay away; but you can  
depend on me. I'll come back. I leave my hat here.

Cora

Are you sure he won't induce you---

Julia

No. You do'nt know him. I just tell him I'm going home, and I'll  
tell him he can call to see me, for father does'nt know the truth.  
I will come back allright.

Gora

Very well, then go; but don't be long, for I'll be anxious.

Julia

goes to door, I will help you pack when I return, so don't rush.  
She opens door and leaves.

Gora sits down to think.

Gora

I'll work the game, but I am afraid I hold no trumps. She sighs.  
A pause. I wonder whether men ever marry their mistresses. She is  
in deep thought.

Door opens. Enter Martin.

Martin

in low tone, She's in trouble and her sister is the cause of it.  
He stops in front of her. She startles.

Gora

I didn't know you were in the room.

Martin

You're all wrapped up in your thoughts.

Gora

Yes, I was thinking.

Martin

I am afraid your thoughts were not very pleasant. She looks at  
him. Yes, I know, I have no right; but I want the right. I want  
the right to protect you. Gora, can I hope that you will be my  
wife?

Gora

rises, I—I don't know what to say to you, Martin. I know that you  
have loved me for some time, and I have tried hard to ask my heart  
whether your love is returned; but do what I will, the answer will  
not come. It will not say yes, it can not say no. You are indeed  
worthy of a better woman than I am.

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Martin

Is there no other ?

Cora

There is no other. I am waiting for the answer of my heart, if you are willing to wait.

Martin

I shall wait and hope.

The "dummy" buzzer is heard. Cora runs over to "dummy".

Cora

calls down, Hello.

A voice is heard answering: Boxes from the delicatessen store.

Cora

Oh, send them up, please.

Martin

Let me take them off. He goes over, takes boxes off "dummy", puts them on the floor and calls down: There is a nickel on the shelf for you. Allright, take it down. He closes door.

Cora

How nice of the delicatessen man to send up such good boxes. They will do fine for all the pots and pans.

Martin

Let's fill them right up. They start packing a box as Curtain falls

Curtain.

Act II.

Scene: Dining room in Gorham's new flat.

The room is rather small but comfortably furnished: a small oak sideboard with some glassware on, a round dining room table, bed & couch and five rather worn-looking leather chairs comprise the furniture of the room. The windows have white ruffled curtains, tied back with white cord and tassel. A rocker, rather a relic, as it had belonged to the dead mother, stands in the corner of the room. The blinds are drawn.

As curtain rises Cora is seen asleep on the bed couch. A chair stands in front of her. On the seat of the chair stands an alarm clock; on the back of the chair hang some of Cora's clothes.

It is rather dark in the room.

After a few seconds of silence Mr Gorham enters, collar and tie in hand. He looks around and sees she is asleep.

Mr G

whispers, The alarm can't have gone off yet, or she would be awake. He takes watch out of pocket, looks at it and chuckles. What a chump I am; here it is six o'clock, and I thought it was seven. He puts watch back in pocket. Well, I'm glad I ain't late anyway. I'll set about getting breakfast ready; it'll be a little lift for Cora. He takes sugar bowl from side board and puts it on the table also spoons and table silver. While doing this he says: I wonder how we will all manage when she is married. Not very well, I am afraid. He drops a glass. Darn the luck. I don't want her to wake up till I have finished setting the table. He picks up glass, looks over at Cora. She must be very tired or that noise would have woke her. He walks on tip-toe over to radiator and touches it. It's so hot we could use it if we were short in a chair. I think I will light the stove; the poor child hates getting up in a cold room. He gets up on a chair and lights the stove, which is

attached to the gas jet. As he comes down he says: I guess Martin is right when he says: The only steam you get in a steamheated flat is the steam from the water kettle when it boils. He looks at the table. I'll get the butter; I don't think it will melt in this room. He opens door leading to the kitchen, leaves it open, goes in for a moment and returns with butter dish. As he is about to put same on the table the alarm clock begins to ring. He startles, drops butter dish on floor.

Cora sits up, looks around and sees her father.

Cora

What's the matter, father? How come you to be up so early?

Mr G

I looked at my watch and thought it was ten minutes to seven and it was ten minutes to six. I thought perhaps the alarm didn't work or maybe you didn't hear it, so I jumped out of bed, and— he laugh — here I am.

Cora

looks at table and smiles, I see you have been trying to set the table.

Mr G

Yes, but I dropped the butter bowl.

Cora

You dropped the butter bowl? Where is it?

Mr G

points at it, I'd pick it up; but I don't know how to get the butter up.

Cora

Don't you worry about that; I'll fix it in a minute. You call Martin while I get in my clothes.

Mr G

Does he want to get up so early?





Cora

Yes, I am ready. She takes napkins from side board and puts one at each plate; then runs into kitchen.

Enter Mr G, coat in hand, throws same over back of chair and sits down. He cuts orange in two, takes spoon and begins to eat.

Cora

is heard calling, Did you take the milk off the dummy?

Mr G

No, there was'nt any to take.

Cora

is heard, Well, then it's been stolen again. That's the third time this week. I'll have to stop taking Borden's milk; I'll get it at the grocer's hereafter. She stands in the doorway. Now, how are you going to eat your Force without milk?

Mr G

Oh, never mind, I do'nt care much about it this morning anyhow.

Martin

enters, Good morning.

Mr G, and Cora

at the same time, Good morning.

Martin sits down opposite Mr G.

Martin

I am in an awful hurry this morning; got a lot of work to attend to before nine o'clock. He cuts his orange.

Mr G

Very busy, ?

Martin

Yes, this is our busy season.

Mr G takes Force and fills his plate, then suddenly remembers there is no milk.

Mr G

Oh, I forgot there's no milk.

Martin

No milk; did'nt the milk man leave any?

Cora

Oh, yes, but somebody has a quart of milk that does'nt cost them anything. Once in a while the dummy supplies that.

Martin

puts down his napkin, rises, Well, you we'nt go to work without your Force; I'll get a bottle of milk.

Mr G

Ypu'll do nothing of the sort. You're in a hurry, and—

Martin

Now, quit all your talk and wait just a minute and you'll have your milk. He goes out hurriedly.

Mr G

Cora, you do'nt know what you'll lose if you do'nt marry him.

Cora

We must first have Julia married; then we'll think the matter over a little more seriously.

Mr G

How are things going for Julia? He's a mighty fine fellow; plainly speaking, much too good for her.

Cora

a sad look in her eyes, Yes, he is a fine fellow. Julia will be very, very lucky if he marries her.

Mr G.

Well, he must have some good intentions or he would'nt call so often. I've noticed you have quite some influence over him; no doubt because he wants to keep on the right side of his future sister-in-law. Cora is deep in thought. Do'nt you think so, Cora? She is  
too deep in thought to hear him.

too deep in thought to hear him. Cora, didn't you hear what I said?

Cora

No, er—yes, yes: oh, the coffee is boiling. She runs out

Mr G

calls after her, A small cup for me to-day, Cora.  
He sits and thinks a few moments.

Mr G

in low tone, I am afraid Cora sees it is hopeless; she's not very cheerful when I talk about him. A pause. Well, I'll never blame him for keeping her, when she willingly went with him; but if he is coming here now, knowing she is the daughter of respectable parents, and does not marry her, he'll find out there's a father can defend his girl.

Enter Martin with bottle of milk, puts it on the table.

Mr G

It didn't take you long.

Martin

It's just across the street, and I take two steps at the time.

Enter Cora with two cups of coffee; places one for each.

Cora

That was very kind of you, Martin. I would have gone for it myself, but I wasn't dressed.

Martin

We have the milk; now let's use it and forget the rest; besides, I'm going to eat some Force this morning, so I need some of the milk myself.

Cora

I'll get you a dish. She goes into kitchen.

Mr G. is now busy eating his Force; Martin again begins to eat his orange.

Mr G

I need not pile in a big breakfast this morning; I've got an early lunch. Eleven o'clock this week.

Enter Gera with dish for Force; places same at Martin's plate.

Gera

Now I guess you won't need me for a few moments. I'll hurry and get my clothes on. She goes over to chair and takes her clothes, trying to hide her corsets.

Gera

as she nears the door, Martin, will you be home to lunch to-day?

Martin

Yes, I'll be home about half past eleven. I have an appointment with a customer at one o'clock in one hundred and tenth street; but don't get a big lunch for me; I'll have to take a few drinks with that man.

Gera

You'll be just in time father's leavings. She smiles and leaves.

Mr G

My poor girl; she didn't take time to dress. She was afraid she wouldn't get breakfast ready in time.

Martin

It's too bad she has to work so hard.

Mr G

I know you would be glad to take her away from all this care and worry.

Martin

No, I shouldn't care to take your only comfort from you; but I should like to have the right to furnish some help.

Mr G

Martin, nothing would suit me better than to give you my dear girl. I know you would make her happy.

Martin

Mr Gorham; my whole life would be devoted to make her every wish mine.

Mr G

I believe you, Martin. He gets up, goes over to him and puts his hand on his shoulder. Do'nt lose courage, my boy. You'll win her, I'm sure you will. I'll be going now. He goes to door. Tell Cora I could'nt wait to kiss her; I'll have to run now. He opens door. Turns and says laughingly: Do'nt forget, Martin, you're in a hurry He leaves.

Martin

in sad tone, You'll win her; I'm sure you will. Shakes head sadly. I'm afraid he's mistaken. A short pause. He is suddenly reminded he must go to work; goes quickly into his room and returns in a moment with hat and coat, puts them on and again stops to think. To-night. I'll speak again to-night. He opens door and walks out.

Cora

is heard calling, Fred, Fred, time to get up. Come now, do'nt let me call you again.

Enter Julia. pale and haggard looking. She sits down as if disgusted  
Hang it all. Was'nt I better off away from all these saints? I had him then, had him all to myself. He was free to love and caress me, to kiss me; and now, dam it all, he comes here among a bunch of saints. He is afraid to draw his own breath without permission from Cora. She bites her lips. Cora. He seems to listen to everything she says; she has sort of hypnotised him. I wonder, ah, no, I'm a jay. What would he want with a saint like her. He's just getting on the right side of her; he wants to make sure she'll let him come here and see me whenever he wants. Oh, the duce with it all.

Enter Cora in house-dress with long sinsham apron on.

Cora

surprised, Julia, how did you fly out of bed so early?

Julia

I could'nt sleep.

Cora

You look pale; do'nt you feel well?

Julia

No, I'm sick, sick as a dog; sick and tired of it all.

Cora

Now, Julia, that is'nt the way to fight for a victory.

Julia

What do you want me to do, dance a highland fling, when I am as miserable as can be.

Cora

And why should you be miserable now?

Julia

Well, I ai'nt a dope; I can see the marriage game does'nt appeal to him.

Cora

Then why does he call?

Julia

Well, I do'nt ~~now~~ know; I've been asking myself that question, and I can't answer it. She gets up as if her mind were made up. I'm going to ask him to take me back. To Hell with the wedding-bells; he do'nt want them, and I can be happy without them.

Cora

Julia, Julia, you do'nt know what you are saying; why, he respects you a thousand times more than he did before you came home. His treatment to you now is full of gentlemanly respect.

Julia

Well, then I do'nt want respect; I want love. I love him, and I want what love entitles one to get. Do you think I can stand it, seeing him walk around like an ice-berg. He's out of place; he's no doubt as unhappy as I am.

Gora

You are again losing control over your senses. Look here, calm your self, and I'll tell you what we'll do.

Julia

disgusted, Do, do, that's what I hear all the time, and yet you've done nothing but spoil my happiness.

Gora

Give me a few hours more time; I'll send for him. I will talk with him, and I will find out once for all what his intentions are. You really do not deserve my struggling for you, but I do for the one who's dead, for mother's sake.

Julia

And suppose he will tell you he will not marry me?

Gora

I do'nt think he will say that after I'm through talking to him. Take my advice; forget about the life you've ~~had~~ lived with him. I am sure he does'nt want to think of it; he's ~~in~~ glad you are home.

Julia

Well, he does'nt show he is glad I am home; I can't make him out, since I am home. He comes often enough, but somehow he ai'nt the same; and I can't find out why. She stops to think a moment. Do you know, Gora, it would'nt be a bad idea if you did talk to him, hnat to see what's in him. He'll tell you the truth allright; that I am sure of.

Cora

Allright; I'll let Fred ring him up and tell him I want him. I'll finish the thing one way or the other this morning; so now don't fret or worry yourself to death. You look a wreck. Take a glass of milk and go and lie down and calm your nerves. I promise you I will do all I can, and I'm almost sure I will succeed.

Enter Fred, collar on but tie not fixed.

Fred

Gee, I can't get this tie right. Martin always gets his so nice, and I can't find out the trick.

Cora

Come here, I'll make a four-in-hand.

He goes over to Cora, who fixes tie for him.

Julia gets up, takes a glass of milk and drinks it.

Julia

Shall I wake baby?

Cora

Yes, take her up and send her in to me; I'll dress her.

Julia

I'll dress her, if she'll let me. She goes in.

Cora Bring me the comb and brush, Fred.

~~Cora~~ Fred

looks into glass of sideboard, Gee, that's a fine four-in-hand.

He goes in.

Cora takes out bib for baby from side-board drawer and puts it on chair at table. Enter Fred with comb and brush and hands it to Cora.

Cora

combing his hair, Fred, will you do sister a favor?



Fred

I bet you want some errands again.

Cora

No, not exactly. I only want you to go over to the drugstore and ring up Mr Underwood and tell him sister Cora would like him to call this morning if possible.

Fred

Must I go before breakfast?

Cora

Yes, dear, it won't take a minute. I want to be sure you'll catch him home. You know he leaves early.

Fred

Allright. Where's my hat?

Cora

Here it is on the rocker. She hands him hat; he takes it and runs out.

Cora

I know he'll come; I want to have it over and done with. I am not strong enough to hold Julia any longer; besides, I want to feel— She is in deep thought.

Enter little Caroline in night-dress.

Baby

Won't you please dress me, Cora; Julia is so cross again.

Cora

Yes, dear; I'll dress you. She takes child up tenderly and sits her on chair. I'll bring your clothes. She goes in.

Baby

I wonder if Mr Underwood will bring me my doll to-day? I hope, he do'nt forget about it.

Enter Cora with baby's clothes; begins to put on shoes and stockings

Baby

Baby

Let me stay home to-day; I hate that old Kinder Garten.

Cora

All good little girls go to Kinder Garten; and then, you know, Mr Underwood would'nt give a doll to a little girl who does'nt go to Kinder Garten.

Baby

Will he sure bring that doll?

Cora

as she continues dressing her, I'm pretty sure he will. She is now buttoning the child's under skirt. Come now, dear, I'll wash and comb you before I put your dress on. She takes child by the hand and leads her into other room.

Baby

is heard saying, Ouch, do'nt rub so hard.

Enter Fred, throws down his hat.

Fred

Gee whiz, but I'm hungry. He makes a dive for the orange left by Martin. He eats it with gusto; throws peelings on table. Looks at things on table. Where's that jam, I wonder? I'll look in the ice-chest. He runs into kitchen, comes back in a moment with jar of jam. I love my breakfast, but oh you jam. He takes a table spoon and eats. Each time he puts spoon in mouth his face is all smiles.

Cora

enters with baby, Freddie, what are you doing with my jam?

Fred

Foolish question. Do'nt you see what I'm doing with it; eating, of course.

Cora

Put that jam down, or I'll——

Fred

Box your ears. Allright, sis, here it is. He puts jam on table. It ai'nt as good as it ought to be anyway.

Cora

Sit down and I'll give you your breakfast. Come baby. She puts her at the table, then serves both children with force and milk. Now I'll get your cocoa ready. You'd better hurry, Fred, or you'll be late. She goes in.

Baby

Do you like your teacher, Freddie?

Fred

Yes, when I ai'nt in school.

Baby

I just hate my teacher, cause she wo'nt let me be teacher even for a little while.

Fred laughs, as he puts a spoon full of Force in his mouth.

Fred

Say, a fine kind of teacher you'd make.

Enter Cora with two cups of cocoa; gives same to children.

Cora

Now, Fred, you'd better rush; it's a quarter of nine.

Fred

Then I am late sure. Here goes. He spills cocoa in saucer. Looks at Cora. Say, sis, can't help it; circumstances alter cases. He takes a few swallows, then jumps up.

Cora

Wait a minute, Fred, you had better put on your coat. She runs in and returns immediately with coat. He slips on the coat, takes hat from back of chair and runs to door.

Fred

turns round, Oh, sis, I forgot to tell you, Mr Underwood says he will be here in a little while. He runs out.

Cora

opens the door and calls after him, Fred, Stop at Mrs Hart's and tell Reina that Caroline will be down in a few minutes.

Fred

is heard calling, All-right.

Cora

closes door, He'll be here in a little while, and I have'nt got a thing cleared away. She goes over to baby, Are you through with your breakfast?

Baby

Yes, I finished.

Cora lifts her down, fixes ribbon on her hair, then goes in for hat and coat. She returns in a moment and dresses child.

Cora

There now, run along. She leads her to door and opens same, Baby holds up mouth to be kissed. She kisses her and leads her out.

Cora

Now be careful, dear; knock at Reina's door, she's waiting for you. Good-bye, dear, be a real good girl. She comes in and closes door. A pause. He'll be here any moment. What shall I say to him, how shall I begin? Well, she pulls herself together, I will straighten up the room first and plan afterwards. She first fixes bed-couch. I do wish we could have a flat large enough for all of us to have bed rooms. She pounds the pillow and puts on couch-cover, making it look like a couch again. Well, since rooms are scarce I think these couches are quite an invention. She begins clearing things off the table.

Enter Julia, dressed in flashy street costume and large hat.

Gera

looks at her surprised, I thought you were lying down.

Julia

I changed my mind. I think the air will do me good. What message did you get from Aleek?

Gera

He'll be here in a little while.

Julia

aside, I thought so, aloud, It's better you see him while I am out; you'll have more courage to talk to him.

Gera

You may rely on me. I've made up my mind this drama must come to an end, and it will.

Julia

goes to door, Do you like this dress, Gera?

Gera

The dress is pretty but too fashionable for a letter carrier's daughter.

Julia

It ain't my fault I am only a letter carrier's daughter; I should have liked to be the daughter of a count.

Gera

And I am proud and glad I am the daughter of a letter carrier.

Julia

Oh, well, what's the use of arguing with you; I never could make you see things in the twentieth-century-light.

Gera

No, thank God.

Julia

Well, I'll be off. I wish you luck and success for my sake and yours too. She opens door and leaves.

Cora

silly, She is bad right through. She looks upward, But, mother, I promised, and I will keep my word.

She again takes to clearing off table. She takes off white cloth and puts on a tapestry cloth and a white center piece. She then puts a fern dish on table. She uses carpet sweeper, places chairs in order and is dusting when bell rings.

She presses button then looks in side-board mirror; fixes her hair, throws off her kitchen apron, throws duster into kitchen and closes door. She goes and opens door.

Enter Mr U, hat in hand.

Mr U

Good morning, Miss Gorham.

Cora

Good morning. I see you didn't lose any time.

Mr U

I was just ready to leave when I got your message; I thought I'd come before I went down town. I'm not very busy this week.

Cora

I'm glad it caught you in time.

Mr U

sits down, Anything wrong, Miss Gorham?

Cora

Well, I don't know; to me everything seems wrong, that is, judging from the teachings of my parents. But I hear the phrase so often: You're not the twentieth-century-kind.

Mr U

No, you're not, but that's not unfortunate for you and very fortunate for the man who will have the honor to make you his wife.

Cora

smiling, Oh, thank you, that was indeed a pretty speech; but it is

not at all the matter I wish to talk to you about.

Mr U

Well, I am ready; I am all attention.

Cora

Then I will come to the point at once. She draws a deep breath.

Mr Underhill, do you intend to marry my sister?

Mr U

taken by surprise, That question was rather abrupt; I expected your father would——

Cora

He intended to speak to you; but I thought it was safer for me to speak first.

Mr U

Well, Miss Corham, I scarcely know what to say to you; I don't know how much you know.

Cora

hangs her head, I know all, Mr Underwood. Julia tells the truth.

Mr U

Well, if you know the truth, if you know I did not encourage your sister, on the contrary, I tried to induce her to go back to the straight path, how can you expect me to marry her. Cora looks into his eyes, all attention. Don't you realize that a man does not want to marry a girl who can be thrown like a rubber ball, up or down or from side to side. Men want to be amused with a bouncing ball, but they want to marry a woman with a soul, a woman with a heart that beats with virtue. He looks her straight in the eye. A woman, who looks straight into a man's eyes, as you do now.

Cora

Then why did you come here so often?

Mr U

Because at first I did not know what you all expected of me. I ~~may~~ thought it was your means in keeping your sister at home; but then something else compelled me to call. Yes, I say the word:compelled because I feared my calling would end like this; but I could'nt help it. I was like a drowning man holding on to a straw; I could not let go.

Cora

amazed, I—I do'nt understand you.

Mr U

I know you do'nt, and I think it is best that I do not enlighten you. He rises slowly, takes hat and coat.

Cora is looking at him, wondering like a child. He goes to door.

Mr U

holds out his hand, Will you shake hands with me, Miss Gorham? We may never meet again.

She walks slowly over to him, holds out her hand. He takes it gently, looks into her eyes. His will power leaves him; he puts hat and coat on chair and looks at her with love shining in his eyes.

Mr U

It's no use; I can't leave without telling you. Miss Gorham, as I said before, I came here at first because I did not know what you expected of me, but when I learned the truth it was too late. I could'nt go back, for the vision of a brave young girl, who is daughter, sister, mother and friend in her own home, was ever before me. I could'nt shut it out, and do what I would I had to follow that beautiful vision. Do you understand me now?

Cora

staggers, whispers, Yes, yes, I understand; but you must go now, you must go now. She is trembling with emotion.



Mr U

I will go; but I want you to say to me: I do not love you. She looks at him questioningly, It will not be so hard.

Cora

looks up at him, trembling, I—I do. She cries out, Oh, please please go.

Mr U

in a joyous frenzy, I knew it, I knew it. He grasps her in his arms. You do love me. I've read it in those innocent eyes many, many times; but you dared not even breath it to yourself.

Cora

Oh, please, please, let me go. Do'nt you see this is a mad love, that can never be. She struggles to free herself.

Mr U

Perhaps you are right; perhaps it can never be. But does that alter the fact that I love you, and you, you can't hide the truth, you do love me.

Cora

as he releases her, a picture of bewildered misery. Oh, Mr Underwood, if you would but have passed out through that door, leaving me think rather than tell me what you did. Oh, she sobs, I would give half of my life to be able to say to you truthfully: I do'nt love you; but, she sobs, I can't, I can't. He moves a step as if to take her in his arms again. She puts up her hand as if to stop him. You must not touch me again. I can be nothing but a thought to you, for I can never, never become your wife, without breaking my sister's heart and earning a bitter hatred from my father; and worst of all, being haunted by the face of my dead mother. You see, how hopeless it is. Oh, please, please go now. She sobs.

He picks up hat and coat again; holds out his hand, she puts her hand in his. Their eyes meet; they are both trying to master the situation.

Mr U

Will you grant me one kiss? We may never meet again.

Her look means: yes. He takes her in his arms and kisses her. Their parting is very sad.

Cora

trying to be just, Now, please go; father will be here soon for lunch. I must have it ready; he must not suspect.

He releases her and goes to door.

Mr U

in sad tone, If we never meet again, remember my last thought was of you. He bows his head and leaves.

Cora

cries out in despair as door closes, Oh, what have I done, what have I done. She throws herself on couch, sobbing.

Door opens and closes with a bang.

Enter Julia, eyes ablaze, her whole attitude one of vile temper.

Julia

rushes over to Cora, Yes, you've done all right for yourself; but what have you done for me, you snivelling, deceitful, saintly wretch?

Cora

looks at Julia, a picture of misery, Julia, I forbid you to use such language in this house.

Julia

Indeed; and if I were to forbid you to love the man who belongs to me, would you listen to me?

Cora

Yes, Julia, yes, I will listen to you.

SS

Julia

in wrath, You lie, and you know you lie. I didn't go out for a walk; I was suspicious of you, you dear, good saint, she sneers, I stood out there and waited till he came, and heard your confession of love. Cora lowers her eyes. Well, why don't you say something?

Cora

There is nothing to say, since you say you heard. The only thing I can say is I will never be his wife.

Julia

Indeed; and how will that benefit me? You stole his affection from me by ~~sex~~ pretending you were all virtue. You posed as he said: a daughter, a sister, a friend; you knew how to work your little game, and now you think, when you say you will never marry him, I'll believe you. No, I'm damned if I do.

Cora

rises, firm; she is hurt to the quick, You need not believe me; I do not ask it of you; but now listen to me, it's my turn to say something. You say I posed as a daughter, a sister, a friend, a model of virtue; then it was virtue that bought him. I didn't have to throw myself at his feet, to be his door-mat; I was not his rubber ball, his plaything, as he called you. I was simply what every woman should be, and that which you are not. Why didn't you try to buy him the same as I did; I didn't find it hard. I have only to say the word: yes, and I can be his wife; but if you were to crawl on your knees from here to the end of the world it would do you no good. She looks at Julia defiantly.

Julia

panting with temper, So, you taunt me, do you? You deceitful wretch. She picks the sugar bowl from side-board and throws it at Cora, but misses.

Cora

I warn you, it's for your own good; leave this house at once.

Julia

Leave this house ? How clever. Leave now without showing father ~~how his angel worked the game?~~ Oh, no, my bird; I'll cage you all-right. I'll never leave you till I've made you as miserable as you made me.

Cora

worried, Father won't believe you; he will listen to me.

Julia

Leave that to me; it's time for y trumps to be played. She hisses You cheat. Cora covers her face with her hands. Julia smiles sarcastically. So, my birdie is beginning to fear already; that's fine medicine allright.

Door opens; enter Mr Gorham. He takes off hat and coat; notices bowl and sugar on floor.

Mr G

Hello, what's this; it looks rather sweet around here.

Julia

It ain't as sweet as you think.

Cora

to Julia, Let me give him his lunch first.

Julia

Oh, no, he's earned what he is going to get by worshipping his angel child.

Mr G

to Julia, Now, Julia, if you're going to make any trouble I wish you would say nothing to me about it; your sister has been more than a mother to you.

Cora looks at Julia in sad and pleading manner.

Julia

Do mothers steal their daughters' lovers from them?

Mr G

looking from one to the other, I do'nt understand you.

Cora is almost ready to collapse.

Julia

Of course you do'nt; how should you? How could you understand that your angel would steal her sister's lover from her.

Mr G

bewildered, goes over to Cora, Cora, is what she says true?

Cora

trembling. looks at him, No, father, no, I swear it; I did'nt steal him from her.

Mr G

And I believe you, girlie. I believe you. He takes her in his arms.

Julia

And will you believe her when I tell you that only a little while ago she was in his arms, listening to a wild declaration of love? Mr G. again looks at Cora questioningly.

Cora

Yes, that's true; but I did not willingly take him from her.

Mr G

shocked, You did not willingly; then you confess?

Cora

Yes; but, father, I am innocent. I did not know I was teaching him to love me; I did not know that virtue over-rides passion and beauty even with such men as he. Believe me, father, I would give half of my life to undo what I have done.

Mr G. stands there, a picture of abject misery.

A short pause. Cora is watching him breathlessly.

Mr G

Gera, come here. She goes slowly over to him. Now, my girl, my future hangs upon your answer to my question. Look into my eyes, and tell me you do not love that man.

Gera begins to tremble; she has a hard battle with her conscience. She tries to raise her head, but can not.

Mr G

noticing her emotion, Why do'nt you answer me?

Gera

cries out, I can't, father, I can't.

Mr G

covers his face with his hands, whispers, My God, my God. He stands a few moments in silence; then in determined manner goes to chair, picks up hat and coat. Gera runs over to him.

Gera

Where are you going, father?

Mr G

To punish the man who ruined the lives of both my girls.

Gera

clings to him in terror, Father, father, for God's sake do'nt do anything rash. Think, we have no mother; do'nt do what you will afterwards regret.

Mr G

tries to push her away, You are not pleading for your father; you are pleading for your lover, a man, who ruined your sister's life.

Gera

He did not; she ruined her own life, and she knows I speak the truth I confess I love him, but I swear to you I will never marry him,

Julia

And you believe that, father?

Mr G

No. I do not.

Cora

cries out, Oh, father. please take back those words.

Door opens; enter Martin. He looks around; does not know what to say or do.

Cora looks at him as if a new thought had come to her.

Cora

goes over to him, Martin, I will be your wife, if you will have me Mr G. and Julia both look up surprised.

Mr G

before Martin can answer, Martin she does not love you; she only wants to marry you. She wants some one to protect her.

Martin looks at Cora, who stands there with head bowed down, a picture of grief. He opens his arms to her; she looks up at him slowly and, like a frightened bird, comes into his arms. He folds his arms tightly around her.

Martin

looks at Mr G., That is just what she needs, Mr Gorham.

Curtain.

Act III.

Scene: same as act II.

Time: next day, at eight p.m.

As curtain rises Cora is getting baby ready for bed. Fred is seated at table, trying to draw a map.

Baby

yawning, Cora. when Mr Underwood comes again don't forget to remind him about my doll.

Fred is losing patience with his map; he is tearing sheets of paper and throws them around table.

Cora

looking sad, You'll have your doll; sister will see to that. Tell me, dear, what's the matter, your little hands are so warm; don't you feel well?

Fred

Hang this old map; I can't get it right.

Baby

My head aches, and I feel tired.

Cora

rises, after taking off baby's shoes, I'm afraid she is ill; I think I will give her a cascaret, it won't do her any harm.

Fred

disgusted, as Cora walks over to him, Say, sis, I wish you'd help me with this map. Look at this, he holds up map, this is supposed to be North America; it looks more like a rooster's head, don't it?

Cora

looks at it smiling, It looks as if you didn't take much pains.

Fred

Didn't I? Well, I did; it gives me a pain, but I just can't do it. Will you help me, sis?



Baby puts her head against back of chair, as if her head were too heavy for her little body.

Cora

That's just what's the matter with you, Fred, you are depending on my doing it for you; but did you stop to think that 's cheating?

Fred

Well, people ai'nt got no right to expect you to do what they can't do, that's all.

Cora

as she puts hand on knob of door, Now, Freddie, just try once more you know what Pa says: "I can't" never did anything, "I'll try" has done wonders. Now, dear, try once more like a good boy. She opens door and goes in.

Fred

I wish the feller what invented making maps would come and make mine for me.

Enter Cora, looks at baby, whose head is resting against chair.

Cora

as she opens box of Cascarets, The child is sick; I do hope it is nothing serious. She goes over to baby. Caroline, dear, what's the matter?

Baby

I'm allright, sister, I just got a little head-ache, that 's all.

Cora

What did you buy for your penny to-day?

Baby

A Lally-pop.

Cora

Perhaps that did it.

Baby

But I eat a Lally-pop every day, and it do'nt make me sick.

Cora

Here, dear, take this. You like Cascabets, do'nt you?

Baby

Yes. She takes one and puts it in her mouth.

Cora

Now come, I'll put you to bed.

Fred is busy with his map.

Cora lifts baby from chair, takes her by the hand and leads her in to other room, leaving door open.

Cora

is heard saying, Now say your prayers.

Baby

is heard saying, Now I lay me down to sleep, I pray the Lord my soul to keep; if I should die before I wake, I pray the Lord my soul to take. Amen.

Cora

is heard, Now go to sleep, dear; you'll feel better in the morning

Fred

looks at map. I think this looks something like it.

Enter Cora; Fred jumps up and runs over to her, map in hand.

Fred

Look, sis, this looks more like it, do'nt it?

Cora

Yes, it is much better than the other one. Come, I'll help you finish it.

Fred

Allright; I'll do something for you some time.

They go to table and sit down.

Cora

Let me see; yes, this line reaches out too far, we'll fix that first. She takes up pencil and begins to work.

Fred

looks at her, Say, what's the matter with you; you look as if you was sick.

Cora

does not look up from paper, I'm allright; only a little tired, that's all.

Fred

I do'nt believe it. You always work as hard as you do now; but you never looked as bad as you do since yesterday. I'll bet Julia had one of her cranky fits; I wish she would go away again.

Cora

You must'nt say that, Freddie; Julia is your sister.

Fred

Well, that ai'nt my fault, is it? I wish she was'nt for she's always making trouble in the house.

Cora

See, dear, does'nt this look better?

Fred

Gee, yes, it's fine; all the fellows will be jealous when I get one hundred per cent.

Enter Martin.

Cora

looks up, What brought you back so soon?

Martin

They were all out, and I was'nt sorry; I am pretty tired to-night. He takes off hat and coat.

Cora

You look tired; I'd go to bed early, if I were you. Here, Fred, she hands him the map, put your map away till to-morrow morning. I'll look at it again; it's nearly nine o'clock, time for you to go to bed.

Fred

takes map. Can't I stay up a little longer?

Gora

No, dear; you know it is so hard to get you out of bed in the morning. You need a good night's rest. Now run along.

Fred goes over to her and kisses her.

Fred

Good night, sis.

Gora

Good night, dear.

Fred

Good night, Martin.

Martin

Good night, Freddie.

Fred leaves. Gora begins to pick up papers Fred had thrown about.

Martin

looks at her, Gora, I want to have a little chat with you if you do'nt mind.

Gora

goes over to him slowly, sadly, Are you going to talk to me about-

Martin

No, dear, I am not. You are not my prisoner; I am not your judge. I will ask you nothing; I only want you to know you are not in duty bound to become my wife.

Gora

surprised, falteringly, So, you're afraid. He is about to speak, she continues, Oh, I'm sure I do'nt blame you. You did'nt know all last night; but this morning my sister spoke loud enough for you to hear.

Martin

You are wrong; I didn't hear one word your sister said, for I did not close my eyes all night, and when morning came I fell so sound asleep your father had to call me twice.

Cora

But you know something?

Martin

I know all; but I heard nothing from any one. I simply kept my eyes open, and a lover's eyes they were. I knew from the beginning he loved you, and I soon saw you were learning to love him; but I don't blame you, dear; I know you are innocent. I know that love stole into your heart; you did not ask for it. You can not help loving him any more than I can help loving you.

Cora

a picture of misery, I am not worthy of your love, Martin, or I should be happy to become the wife of a man like you.

Martin

We can't force Cupid to go where we want; if we could, love would be no romance. And now I will finish what I have to say. Cora, these arms that were open to you last night are always open to you. Whenever you should need protection you will find it the same as you did last night. You need not fear for your future; I will watch over you as long as I live. He goes to door; Cora stands head bowed, sobbing, If some day you can forget him I will be honored to make you my wife. He leaves.

Cora

sobs, Oh, my God, if I could but die. I have made so many lives wretched; my father, my sister, the man I love, and the man who loves me. Oh, she wails, throwing herself on couch, how cruelly Fate has dealt with me.

Enter Julia, dressed loudly.

Julia

looks at Cora, Snivelling again. That's all you can do besides being a sneak; but now I'll show you that a pretty face and a woman of tact can outdo you virtuous creatures. I am going to him now, and I'll bet you a dollar to a button, when he finds himself with me alone, when once I put my arms around his neck, he'll be all mine again.

Cora

looks up, If you go to him you can never return to this house .

Julia

as she goes to door, The duce with the house; I don't want it. She opens door, Now we shall see who will have him, you or I. She closes door with a bang.

Cora sits and gradually falls to thinking.

Cora

I wonder—oh, no, no, I am mad, or very near it. She rises and walks up and down the room.

Enter Mr G., takes off hat and coat; looks at Cora for a moment.

Mr G

in low, stern tone, Have you read the paper to-day?

Cora

looks up quickly, No, I didn't have the time. Why do you ask?

Mr G

Oh, nothing, nothing; I just asked, that's all. Where's Martin?

Cora

Gone to his room; he's tired.

Mr G

Children asleep?

Cora

Yes.

Mr G. goes to door leading to Martin's room and goes in.

Cora stands looking at the door in questioning manner; she is trying to think.

Cora

in low, slow tone, I wonder why he asked: did I read the paper? She is again in deep thought. It must concern Martin; he asked about him almost in the same breath; but what can it be? Perhaps Martin has found some of his people, which he gave up for dead.

Yes, that must be it. It can be nothing else. I wish it were so; I wish some one would come into his life to make him happy. Oh,

God, why must he, the dearest and noblest of men, love me, and I can not love him. I never will love him. She shakes her head sadly, My love is a hopeless one, as hopeless as it is to reach the sky on a ladder.

Door opens slowly; enter Martin paper in hand.

Cora

looks at him, Have you read some good news?

Martin

Well, I don't know; to me it should be good news, but I'm not quite sure whether it is good news even to me.

Cora is becoming alarmed, for he is looking at her so strangely.

Cora

What is it? You look as if I were concerned in the matter.

Martin

looking at her, while she is breathing quickly as if afraid to listen, Cora, Mr Underwood is dead.

She looks at him. The great shock has bereft her of speech for a few moments. She stands, eyes fixed on Martin, hands clenched; At a glance one would think she had gone mad.

A short pause.

Cora

in mournful tone, He killed himself

Martin

in low tone, Yes.

Cora staggers, grasps chair for support. She stands holding on to chair; one can see her strength is failing.

Cora

Let me see the paper.

Martin hands her the paper; she takes it and tries to read.

Cora

shakes her head sadly, I can't read; I can't see. Will--will you read it to me?

Martin

Wait, Cora. Wait till to-morrow; you're not strong enough now.

Cora

I am, I am strong. Martin, please read it to me now.

Martin

reads: Mr Alex. Underwood, Cora's emotion is pitiful, of the firm Underwood, Price & Co. was found dead in his room this morning. A shot from his 32 calibre revolver was the cause of his instant death. A letter was found clutched in his hand, which read as follows: "I end my life, because life holds nothing for me without the woman I love.--Cora is about to fall.--She's so pure, so free from sin, she can never be mine. I will wait for her in a better world. Alex. Underwood".

Martin folds the paper. Cora is clutching at her throat; she is choking.

Martin

goes over to her, Did you love him so much?

Cora

with a heart breaking sob, Why don't you ask: did he love me so much. He has proved his love for me. Now there is nothing left for me to love; nothing but the memory that I am the cause of his death



Oh, Martin, can you imagine the suffering there now lies here?  
She puts her hand over her heart.

Martin

No one can know it better than I. I do know, Cora, and I am sorry  
for you. He leads her over to the couch; she sits down.

Cora

I suppose father is satisfied now.

Martin

It was the hand of God that saved him from being a murderer.

Cora

Poor Aleck; his death is a joy to my father. Martin, I want to be  
left alone with my sorrow. Please go to bed.

Martin

That is just what you ought to do; go to bed and rest your nerves,  
they need it.

Cora

I will try to sleep, if that is possible.

Martin

goes to door, I hope you will sleep. Good night.

Cora

as Martin is about to go out, Has father gone to bed?

Martin

Yes; he is not well. He opens door and leaves.

Cora

So, it is all over; Aleck is no more. Only last night I felt his  
kiss on my lips, the kiss that sealed my fate forever; and to-day  
you are lying cold and lifeless, while, the cause of your death,  
am sitting here. I can not even put a flower on your breast; I can  
not see the face I so love, not even before it is shut out of  
the world's light forever. She runs her fingers through her hair.  
God, I can't bear it, I can't, I can't. She rises. Aleck,

you won't have to wait very long; we'll go to-gether. She opens door, goes in.

All is quiet for a few moments; then Cora comes running in, revolver in hand.

Cora

looks at gun, There was a time when I was afraid to make the bed because this lay under my pillow, but I'm not afraid now. Aleck used it; he was not afraid, why should I be? Just one good pull at the trigger—a light comes in her eyes, as she heaves a sigh—and Aleck is mine, never to part. She stands holding gun, looking at it, eyes ablaze. Why do I hesitate? Why do I tremble so? Why—she smiles sadly— I shall see Aleck.

Baby

calls from other room, Cora, Cora, I feel so sick. Cora stands still, revolver in hand, but does not answer.

Baby

calls again, Cora, oh, Cora, my head aches so. Cora still does not answer.

Baby

calls again, Oh, please, Cora, I want to vomit; I'm so sick. Cora drops revolver, runs into other room and comes back with baby in her arms, and lays her on the couch.

Cora

What is the matter, dear?

Baby

Oh, I don't know; I feel so sick.

Cora ~~feels~~

feels her head, She is burning with fever. I'll get the alcohol. She goes in gets alcohol, basin and towel. She pours some of the alcohol in basin of water, moistens handkerchief, and puts it on baby's head.

Baby

Oh, that feels so good.

Cora then bathes the baby's hands.

Cora

touching the little one's feet, Her feet are cold as ice.  
She goes out and returns in a few seconds with a hot-water bag.  
Puts same at baby's feet.

Baby

How good that feels, sister. My feet are so cold.  
Cora then takes cloth from baby's head, dips it into basin again  
and puts it on head.

Baby

I feel much better now. Oh, Cora, what would poor baby Caroline  
ever do without sister Cora.

Cora

looks at her sadly, You won't have to do without sister Cora, dear  
she'll never leave you. Now shut your little eyes and try and go  
to sleep.

She sits on her knees before baby and pats her gently to sleep.  
She then gets up, covers baby and stands looking at her.

Cora

What would poor baby Caroline ever do without sister Cora. She  
looks upwards. I meant to go with you, Aleck; but I can't, a  
deep sigh, not now.

Curtain.